



Urgent Action Office 3-1992 Yonge Street Toronto ON M4S 1Z7 Phone: (416) 363-9933 Fax: (416) 363-3103 urgentaction@amnesty.ca
First UA: 63/23 Index: ASA 33/6890/2023 Pakistan of June 30, 2023

PAKISTAN

YOUTUBER & TV ANCHOR, IMRAN KHAN, FORCIBLY DISAPPEARED

On May 11, 2023, Imran Riaz Khan, a Pakistani YouTuber and TV anchor, was detained and arrested by police at the Sialkot International Airport. It was only after his detention that a detention order was issued alleging he had incited violence. Authorities allege he was released on May 12; however, he has not been seen or heard from since the day he was arrested.

Authorities must immediately and impartially investigate the fate and whereabouts of Imran Riaz Khan, and if he is in state custody, he must be immediately released or, if there is sufficient evidence of wrongdoing, promptly charged with an internationally recognizable crime and brought before a civilian court.

In keeping with the Pakistani government's international human rights obligations, write to the Minister of Interior urging him to:

- Ensure a prompt, and impartial, investigation into the fate and whereabouts of Imran Riaz Khan;
- Should Imran Riaz Khan be in state custody, immediately release him, or if there is sufficient evidence of wrongdoing, promptly charge him with an internationally recognizable crime and produce him before a civilian court;
- End the practice of enforced disappearances and arbitrary detentions; immediately and unconditionally disclose the fate and/or whereabouts of forcibly disappeared people to their families and immediately release forcibly disappeared people or promptly bring them before a judge in a civilian court of law to rule on the lawfulness of their arrest or detention and whether they should be released.

Write to:

Honorable Rana Sanaullah Khan
Minister of Interior,
R-Block Pak Secretariat,
Constitution Ave, Islamabad, Pakistan
Email: secretary@interior.gov.pk
Salutation: Dear Honorable Rana Sanaullah Khan,

And copy:

His Excellency Zaheer Aslam JANJUA
High Commissioner
High Commission for the Islamic Republic of Pakistan
10 Range Road
Ottawa, ON K1N 8J3
Tel: (613) 238-7881, -7882, -7883 Fax: (613) 238-7296
Email: pahicottawa@mofa.gov.pk

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

On May 11, 2023, Imran Riaz Khan, a Pakistani YouTuber and TV anchor was attempting to leave the country due to fears of victimization when he was detained at the Sialkot International Airport. According to Imran's lawyer, there were no pending cases against him at the time of his arrest, and his family were not informed of his arrest.

Imran's lawyer told Amnesty International that Imran was later taken to the Sialkot Cantt police station at around midnight on May 11, 2023. At 10am the next day, a detention order was issued, which according to his lawyer, alleged Imran was inciting violence in the village of Dhana Wali, a community in Sialkot. Imran's lawyers claim these allegations are false.

On May 12, Imran's family filed a petition before the Chief Justice of the Lahore High Court, where the Inspector General of Prisons and Inspector General of Police were ordered to release Imran Riaz Khan by 6pm that day. However, the Inspector General of Prisons informed the court that Imran had already been released. At a subsequent court date, on May 22, the Inspector General of Police confirmed that he was not in police custody.

Media reports state that the court requested CCTV footage of Imran's arrival and release from jail. According to Imran's lawyer, the CCTV footage that was produced before the court had no time stamp, but the police verbally confirmed that Imran was released on May 12, at 11.20pm.

Imran's lawyer alleges that Imran has been disappeared due to his criticism of the current government and the military. According to media reports, Imran was closely connected to former Prime Minister Imran Khan, who was ousted from power on April 9, 2022 after a vote of no confidence in Parliament. Media reports state that prior to April 2022, Imran Riaz Khan was a supporter of the military and at times justified enforced disappearances and attacks on freedom of expression.

Enforced disappearances have long been used as a tool by the Pakistani authorities to target critics, dissenting voices, minority groups, journalists and human rights defenders. Families are left searching for answers and justice with little to no information about the date and whereabouts of their loved ones. Enforced disappearances put victims outside the protection of the law and put them at risk or torture, other ill-treatment or even death.

An enforced disappearance is a violation of the right to security and dignity, the right to life and the right to not be subjected to torture or other cruel or degrading treatment. It contravenes the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) to which Pakistan is a signatory and thus under an obligation to refrain, in good faith, from acts that would defeat its object and purpose.

The enforced disappearance of Imran Riaz Khan comes after the arrest of former Prime Minister Imran Khan and the subsequent violent protests against his arrest in May. Following the violent protests, the government has taken a number of steps in contravention of their obligations under international human rights law, including trying civilians in military courts, mass and arbitrary arrests, unlawful detentions and enforced disappearances.

On October 23, 2022, Arshad Sharif, a journalist and supporter of Imran Khan was killed in Kenya, in what a Pakistani investigative committee referred to as a "planned assassination". In the recent weeks,

a journalist and lawyer were abducted and released after a day. Zubair Anjum, an executive producer for Geo News was abducted from his home in Karachi on June 6, 2023, and returned on June 7. Similarly, human rights lawyer Jibran Nasir was abducted from near his residence on June 1, 2023. Jibran tweeted that he had returned home on June 2, a day after his abduction.